

Dare To Live Fearlessly

A Lenten Devotional



The Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd

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You may wonder at the title "Dare to Live Fearlessly." We are living in a world fraught with fear and worry. Yet we have a distinct advantage to those who are not Christian—we have our Heavenly Father who has promised to walk all of life with us through all eternity. When we are strong God is there encouraging, cheering, challenging, teaching, and laughing with joy at our triumphs. When we are weak he is there comforting, strengthening, carrying and crying over our sorrows. The Stewardship Team dares you to live your life without constantly worrying, fretting or being afraid, to step out and participate in all that life brings, knowing that no matter what happens—through triumph and failure—God is there with his arms around you.

It is our hope that you will use this devotional daily throughout Lent. Each day's devotion begins with a "dare" and a scripture, then a short reflection and prayer that was written by a member of our church family. Three of these were actually written by Sunday School Classes. There is a daily devotion for each day of Lent beginning with Ash Wednesday—40 days in all. Sundays are not included as they are considered "mini-Easters" and not part of the Lenten fast.

This devotional may be used individually, in pairs, small groups or as families. It gives parents an excellent opportunity to talk to their children about faith, making God and his will a priority, and how prayer and Bible study can help you learn God's will. It is also a great way for couples and friends to grow together and help each other along in their faith journeys.

In putting together this devotional, it became increasingly clear that the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd is abundantly blessed by God. We are rich in devoted, insightful, creative, generous, loving, caring, faithful, prayerful people. Everyone who contributed to this devotional stepped up to the challenge, some with more hesitation than others, and did a marvelous job. We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all who took the time to share their faith so that this devotional could come to life.

We hope that you will be blessed by the offerings given here.

~Vicki & John Beilfuss and Maureen Stark
Stewardship Team

DAY 1—Ash Wednesday **Dare to Trust**

Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him. Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart! ~Psalm 32:10-11

It may not seem like much of a “dare” to trust in the Lord. But we have to remember the fact that what we just read about the torments of the wicked and the joy of the righteous does not always match what we see. The one who could not care less about God or other people goes merrily about their way; the devout person struggles as they strive to put their faith into action. We’ve all experienced it. It doesn’t seem fair.

But this is what our eyes see. It isn’t the whole picture. We can’t always perceive the steadfast love of the Lord that surrounds those who trust him. But it is always there. Even when we can’t feel it, the grace of God embraces those who put their faith in him. It is a “dare” to trust God because it means believing that there is something more than what we can perceive.

Every day, the world around us will give us plenty of reasons not to trust God. But his Holy Spirit, which we cannot see, blows where he chooses to (see John 3:8). And the Spirit of Christ is moving, to surround you with his love and grace. You won’t always see it at first. But he is there. So when the world tells you to hedge your bets, play it safe, or to give up, don’t buy it. You are surrounded by the steadfast love of the Lord. No matter what happens, you are his. Step out in faith. Dare to trust in him. He will give you reason to shout for joy!

Great and loving God, surround your people with your steadfast love, so that we may dare to strive for great things in your name. Hear this prayer for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

The Rev. Eric Evers
Associate Pastor



DAY 2—Thursday **Dare to Pray Daily**

Be joyful always, pray continually; give thanks in all circumstance, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.” ~ 1Thessalonians 5:16-18
(New International Version)

Can you imagine not speaking with your family when you start your day? Because I can't, I'd like to share some thoughts about praying daily. I'd like you to challenge yourself to speak with God first thing in the morning each and every day. You may begin by thanking the Lord for bringing you to a new day; he has watched over you while you slept. Remember his promise to always be with you. Praise him for his greatness, power and wisdom; thank him for his love and faithfulness. You may want to ask for his blessings of guidance and wisdom. Now you're ready to meet the new day with all its challenges and opportunities aware that he is with you. Your day is off to a good start.

Are you thinking you don't have time to do this? That mornings are just too busy? That's easy to manage—get up fifteen minutes earlier. Remember you have scheduled a very important meeting with The Creator of the Universe! Try this during Lent. I think it will have a powerful impact on your life and your relationship with your Heavenly Father. Perhaps you'll soon need to allow more time; you'll have so much to discuss with him. Let this become part of your daily morning routine, your private time with the Lord.

Thank you loving Heavenly Father that you care so much for us that you want us to spend time with you. Bless this quiet time so that we may feel your very real presence in our daily lives. We pray in Jesus' name Amen.

Betty Ann Smith, Prayer Chain Partner

DAY 3—Friday

Dare to Tithe

“Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, ‘How do we rob you?’ In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house.

Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have enough room for it.” ~Malachi 3:8-10 (New International Version)

Everything we are and everything we have is a gift from God. Giving 10% of our treasure to do God’s work is one faithful way to help dedicate ourselves to His glory, and it is what He asks of us. But it is so easy to rationalize the opposite: “if I give more to God, that leaves less for me.” But tithing is not like taxes! Freewill giving is not a zero-sum game. . . it blesses both the receiver and the giver.

Americans are the most generous people in the world. But do we give because we have abundance, or are we blessed with abundance because we give when a Christian need to bless others is perceived? God tells us it is the latter. It is the one time in the Bible that the Lord asks us to test Him. But, it is not a test of His patience, but rather, a test of His promise. Just talk to any tither, you will find that God faithfully delivers on His promise. He promises, not just to bless us, but to “throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have enough room for it.” WOW! Now that is a gospel promise. Our God is an awesome God!

Heavenly Father—speak to our hearts and give us the strength of faith to trust in your promise. Help us to understand that generous, faithful giving to honor You and do Your work in this world is not a burden. Help us to see that, in giving, there is abundant blessing to all parties through Your grace. Dare us to heed the word of Malachi, to bless you through tithing, and in so doing, to witness your promised blessing poured out upon us. Amen.

Steven Siegletes, B.Y.O.B Study Leader
(Bring Your Own Bible)

DAY 4—Saturday

Dare to Forgive

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

"Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.

"When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." ~Matthew 18:21-35 (New International Version)

Every day we fall short of God's plan for us. Yet, all we have to do is ask and he forgives us. He does not hold us accountable for past mistakes; he does not love us less due to our failings. In light of this awesome gift, shouldn't we offer the same forgiveness to everyone in our lives who lets us down? How many times do we hold grudges or lash out in anger? How often have we said something unkind about someone else? We need to do better. God wants us to do better. We can start by remembering each day how God forgives us. We can remind ourselves to be more patient, more understanding, and more merciful to

those who may have hurt us.

Heavenly Father, please help us to see our friends, family and neighbors as you see them. Please keep us from closing off our hearts in anger or resentment, and instead open our hearts to share your love and forgiveness. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Diane Brown, Connections Team Leader

✝ 1st Sunday of Lent ✝

DAY 5—Monday Dare to Put God First

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment.” ~Matthew 18:21-35 (New International Version)

It is often challenging to know what we need to focus on at any given point in our lives. We often juggle multiple roles (husband/wife, mother/father, student/employee, neighbor) and multiple responsibilities (family, career, home). Loving God with all of our heart and mind does not need to be an additional responsibility we add to our list, but rather how we fulfill the roles and responsibilities given to us by God. Do we do what is in our best interest or what is in the best interest of someone else? Do we share the resources God gave us with those who need them more than we do? God blessed us to bless others. If we dare to put God first, we dare to view the world through the eyes of God. We are then transformed in His image so that those around us see grace, hope, and most of all love.

Dear Heavenly Father, please enable us to see the world through your eyes. Help us to love you by loving others as ourselves. Guide us in the decisions we make so that we are a reflection of you to those around us at all times. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Stephanie Steinbrunner, Women's Bible Study Participant

DAY 6—Tuesday

Dare to Face Giant Odds

[1 Samuel 17:32-50 David slays Goliath] *The LORD who rescued me from the claws of the lion and the bear will rescue me from this Philistine!*” Saul finally consented. “All right, go ahead,” he said. “And may the LORD be with you!” ~1 Samuel 17:37 (New International Version)

Every day we face difficult decisions and once in a while we are faced with a situation that presents a giant obstacle. We are panic-stricken and almost paralyzed with fear, thoughts go running through our heads – what will we do? How can this be? Everything is hopeless. A heaviness descends on our heart. We ask our family and friends for help and we hear their opinions and anguish over the decisions we must make. Then we turn to the One who conquers all. We ask God to help and guide our decisions. Slowly we come to realize that yes, this is something we must face in this life, but with God’s help it is a situation we can handle. It will be painful and difficult to deal with and we may not like the choices placed before us, but with God’s help and guidance, the obstacles seem manageable. A calm comes over us and there is a sense of peace. The odds may not have changed, the outcome may not be what we want, but by trusting in God and knowing that He is the Father who cares for us and loves us, our journey seems manageable.

Just as David faced Goliath in the name of the Lord Almighty, so should we face our obstacles in the name of the Lord. Say a prayer before facing the giants in your life and ask for help and guidance and be confident in the Lord.

Loving Father, today I have giants to face and I need Your help. Guide my thoughts, words and deeds so that they may be pleasing to You. Show me the way to glorify You in everything I do. Help me to make the right choices and help me to see that through You there is victory. Help me see the stone that will slay my giant today. Through You all things are possible. In Your Son’s holy name I pray. Amen

Judi Webster, Christian Education Mission Group Leader

DAY 7—Wednesday

Dare to Welcome a Stranger

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus: he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. ~Luke 19:1-6 (New International Version)

Is your name Zacchaeus? Would you go to such extremes to see a stranger, besides welcoming him to your house? The Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd is an extension of your house. You come to worship and participate through Bible studies to learn more of Jesus Christ and his teachings. You recognize those who surround you each Sunday, but when someone "new" comes into our midst, how do you treat them? Do you "dare to welcome them" through conversation and invite them to sit with you? The next visitor you see might be Jesus.

Will we be ready to invite him to sit with us and participate in all we offer through the Word and Sacrament? We should open our arms and greet the next stranger we see for that is what God has asked us to do.

Open my eyes, Lord, that I may clearly see the stranger in my midst, and invite that person to worship with me. Help me to reach out to meet and greet others, so that there are no more strangers, only friends. Show me how, by my actions, I can enable others to see you more clearly as well. Amen.

Lowell Repp, Chancel Choir Member

DAY 8—Thursday **Dare To Love Your Neighbor**

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

~Luke 10:29-37 (New International Version)

I am always amazed at how the Holy Spirit rests inside us and helps us really see people for who they are: Children of God. It does not matter if they suffer from addiction, mental illness or other health issues. Our neighbors include those in our homeless shelters, some of whom can be really scary at times. It is not important what we say so much as letting the Holy Spirit guide the conversation or letting the Holy Spirit open our ears to those who need a sympathetic ear or word of advice. Opening our heart, mind and soul to the blessings of the Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, makes it very easy to joyfully practice the commandment to "love your neighbor as yourself."

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit and for salvation through your son, Jesus Christ. Please help me to carry your message into my community through actions and words that always glorify you! Amen.

Kim Wagner, Servanthood Team Leader

DAY 9—Friday

Dare to Try Something New

No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. "Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go. ~ Joshua 1:5-9 (New International Version)

When Debby Woods told me I would be great as a bell ringer and by the way, could I show up Thursday for practice, I said, "yes." Then the doubts flooded in. What had I been thinking? It had been years (okay, decades) since I had last been involved in any formal music program. My skills were rusty to put it mildly. Why did Debby ask me? What would she say once I got there and made a gazillion mistakes?

Well, I showed up that Thursday. I was panicky and I did make a gazillion mistakes, but everyone told me how glad they were that I was there. They encouraged me to keep trying. They all said that I would be fine. And they were right.

Stepping out of one's comfort zone is scary, but God recognizes potential in each of us even when we don't—those gifts we never thought we had or may have even overlooked? God knows they are there, and when He offers us a chance to use them, we may be surprised the results.

Lord, open us to new opportunities to serve. Give us courage to step out in faith knowing that You will be with us. Let Your love and grace flow through us that we may be a blessing to others. Amen.

Virginia Polley, Worship and Music Team Leader

DAY 10—Saturday

Dare to Protect the Environment

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." ~Genesis 1: 26-28 (New International Version)

When our parents give us a job to do, we know that we need to do it. God gave us a job when he told us in Genesis to take care of the earth. Over the years, it is clear that we have not been listening to our Heavenly Father. So many animals today are endangered or extinct. Who has been their voice? Trees and other natural resources are being torn down for the things that we want, not need. Who hears or sees their cry of help?

As Christians we need to do the job that our Father has asked us to do—take care of the earth and all that live on it. Each of us can do something—no matter how large or small—to do our part in protecting the earth. Simple things can be done like supporting animal groups or recycling our waste. We only borrow the earth from our children while we are here. What will be left for them to take care of if we don't do our part now?

Dear Heavenly Father,

Long ago you trusted humans to take care of the earth and all that live on it. It is clear that we have not done our part. Help each of us to do just one thing each day to help the environment so that we can stop things such as animal extinction and an ozone layer with holes in it. Give us strength to show others how to work towards a healthier environment. Guide us to be the caretakers you know that we can be. In your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord we pray. Amen.

3rd, 4th & 5th Grade Sunday School Classes
Facilitated by Connie Charitonuk

‡ 2nd Sunday of Lent ‡

DAY 11—Monday Dare to Speak the Truth

[Jesus said] “*So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed. I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth. I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word.*” ~ John 17:5-6, 15-20
(New International Version)

In this passage, Jesus was preparing for His road to the cross and being reunited with His Father. But despite His knowledge of the suffering to come, He prayed for His disciples and He prayed for us ... “those who will believe in me through [the disciples’] word.” Isn’t it incredible that Jesus prayed for us thousands of years ago; knowing the words and deeds of His disciples on earth would bring us to Him today?

But what was it that Christ asked of His Father for us? To make us pure and holy through God’s truth—His Word. Why? Because we are to be sent into the world to speak His truth to others. Jesus did not ask God to take His disciples—or us—out of the world, but to sanctify us so we can do God’s work in the world. We are called to speak His truth.

Lord and Father, you have given me the Good News of your Son’s sacrifice and love that sinners may have eternal life through Jesus Christ. You have also given me the source of this great truth, your holy Word. Give me the discipline to apply your Word daily through study, reflection, and action. Give me the courage to speak your truth to others and share with them the wonder, comfort, and promise found in your Word. Amen.

Frank Kros, German Exchange Participant

DAY 12—Tuesday

Dare To Ask Forgiveness

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny. ~Matthew 5:23-26 (New International Version)

We are human. We are sinners. We make mistakes. We hurt others, through action or inaction. And, let's face it, we know when we do so. Yet time and again, we compound our sin by digging in our heels, refusing to take the risk of admitting wrongdoing and, so, failing to consider the impact of our mistakes. We find it easier to come up with excuses for our actions, and why it might be someone else's fault. "I had to tell everyone my side of the story first because I'm sure she is going to blab her side all around...Of course I yelled at him—he should know better than to ask me a bunch of questions when I first get home from work, knowing how tired I always am...I know I didn't spend a lot of time working on it, but my boss should have never expected me to take care of that contract, anyway..." Our instinct is to shift the blame to others. But when we refuse to face up to our sins, we eventually pay the price. We need reconciliation with those we've wronged. We need to dare to ask for forgiveness. We should ask God to help us see our sins clearly and repent, regardless of what others may do. That means we need to make ourselves vulnerable: confessing to those we've wronged, acknowledging how we've hurt them, and accepting the consequences. An honest confession will free you from your own personal prison—and will provide you with greater peace of mind.

Gracious God, we know we are sinners. We know we hurt others, even unintentionally. Please give us the wisdom to see our wrongdoings, and the humility to admit our weakness and confess our wrongs. Help us to treat others as we want to be treated, and to accept others as you have accepted us. Help us to model your forgiveness so relationships are healed and your Gospel is revealed. Help us dare to forgive so we can live in Your word. Amen.

Rob Richter, Youth Advisor

DAY 13—Wednesday

Dare to Seek God

And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him! ~Luke 11:9-13 (New International Version)

I recently read a story about a kindergarten class visit to a fire station for a tour. The fireman explained to the children what they should do in the event of a fire. He said: “First, go to the door to see if it’s hot. Then, if it is, fall to your knees. Does anyone know why you should fall to your knees?” One small boy said: “Sure, to start praying to ask God to get you out of this mess!” It is very true that we often seek God’s help only when we find ourselves in a big mess. In our desperation, we call out to God pleading with Him to rescue us or our loved ones from illness, financial peril, loneliness, grief, and so many other difficulties. But, during these times, do we pray for His will, or do we tell Him what to do? When we ask, are we asking for our solution or for His? How often have you prayed with the solution in mind and then, at least initially, been disappointed to find that’s not the solution God had in mind? Perhaps we are praying for the wrong thing! Jesus is not saying that we always get precisely what we ask for but He is saying that we can always trust God to provide the right answers. Even earthly parents know how to give their children the right thing even when they desperately want the wrong thing. Seek God in good times and bad through prayer trusting that he will answer your prayers by helping you to become more like Him. We should not expect to change God but we can always count on God to change us if we only open our hearts to Him! All we need to do is humbly ask, seek and knock....

Dear Heavenly Father—we thank you for the fatherly love you pour upon us especially in times of great need. We trust that you will care for us and provide for us in all ways. Open our hearts to your Word and calm our fears as we put our faith in you. Amen.

Maureen Stark, Lay Worship Assistant

DAY 14—Thursday **Dare To Accept Your Call**

The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.

Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up... "Pick me up and throw me into the sea," he replied, "and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you."... But the LORD provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three night.

From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God. He said: "In my distress I called to the LORD, and he answered me. From the depths of the grave I called for help, and you listened to my cry... When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, LORD, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs. But I, with a song of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. Salvation comes from the LORD."

And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land... Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you." Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city—a visit required three days.

~Jonah 1:1-4, 12, 17, 2:1-2, 7-10, 3:1-3 (New International Version)

I strongly identify with Jonah in this scripture passage. God calls us to confront evil and wrong-doing in our life, and we want to run and hide. New challenges are scary and so is the unknown. We might have to do something that would embarrass us or pull us out of our comfort zone. "Teach a class," "join a choir," "sing a solo," or "ring a bell"—no way!

Jonah was caught—big time—by his reluctance and cowardice. He ran away and was caught and swallowed by a fish. He was entombed for

three days—sound familiar? He called on God for help, and God delivered him from that belly by a mighty spewing! This story sounds like it came straight from the Walt Disney studios!

God calls us all the time. Listen for his voice in everything that you do. Read, pray, and talk to close friends. Dare to find the courage to accept His call. Don't worry! There are no giant whales out there! Just find the will to take up your cross and follow.

Dear Lord—Give me the courage to listen to your voice in my life and to respond to your call. Help me to overcome the doubts and fears which prevent me from following You. Amen.

Debby Woods, LCGS Director of Music

DAY 15—Friday **Dare To Give Generously**

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. ~2 Corinthians 9:6-8

What are spiritual gifts? They are the ones that, through giving, you receive more in return. For me, my gift is playing instrumental music. Just last night Debby invited me to sub at a hand bell rehearsal at Good Shepherd. After a long, busy day at the office, I was tired and didn't feel like going out after dinner. Well, after a few minutes with our fantastic hand bell choir, I became transformed. Energy levels were back, we were making these beautiful sounds. It was fun being there, and I returned home refreshed. Will I continue to give generously? You bet, through giving I feel blessed and energized.

Heavenly Father—help us discover our spiritual gifts; that we may use these gifts to show Your glory and love in our community. Amen

John Beilfuss, Stewardship Team Chair

DAY 16—Saturday

Dare to Serve the Poor

Be careful not to harbor this wicked thought: "The seventh year, the year for canceling debts, is near," so that you do not show ill will toward your needy brother and give him nothing. He may then appeal to the LORD against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land. ~Deuteronomy 15:9-11 (New International Version)

None of us wants to be poor. We do all we can to provide ourselves and our families with shelter, food, and clothing. We work hard to protect ourselves monetarily so that we can continue to live our lives as we have chosen. Sometimes an emergency requires us to redefine the difference between what is needed and what is wanted. All of us have watched the news on TV and read the newspapers picturing the disaster in Haiti. We have seen a very poor nation become even poorer. Many countries, celebrities, and aid organizations, with donated money, are sending health products, medical personnel, food, and water for the survival of the Haitian people. This is wonderful work and certainly needs to be done. However, I am most touched by a group of homeless people in Philadelphia who have also helped. Having little or nothing themselves, they went door to door collecting clothing and blankets to send to Haiti. They looked beyond their own needs and thought of a way to assist those who have even less than themselves. It shouldn't take a disaster for us to look beyond ourselves to see what we can do for those less fortunate in other countries and those close to us. It only takes living our faith in God by opening our eyes and hearts.

We thank you, God, for all you have given us. Help us to open our eyes to see that there are neighbors, not just in other countries, but in our own county who have little and need our help. Help us to open our hearts, following the example of the Philadelphia homeless, and help the poor by reaching within ourselves and sharing as we are able for the good of those in need. Amen

Lee Siebold, Altar Guild

‡ 3rd Sunday of Lent ‡

DAY 17—Monday **Dare to Leave Something Behind**

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him. ~Mark 1:14-20 (New International Version)

If you are like me, it is difficult to imagine having a faith such as Simon, Andrew, James and John to leave behind your family and livelihood to follow Jesus. But even these men were ordinary people like you and me; they had no special education, wealth, or status; they were sinners. In fact, Jesus probably had to ask them more than once to follow Him. Our society pressures us to accumulate more things, to climb the corporate ladder, and to provide everything to our children. Even today, Jesus challenges us, "Follow me."

Do we dare to leave behind our selfishness, our greed, and our attitude? Dare we leave behind ways of thinking or our life choices? Dare we leave behind our busyness, our wants, our desire for control and independence? Trust in God, His love and His plan for you. Dare to leave behind the old life to find a new life in Jesus Christ.

Dear Heavenly Father—I know you have a plan for me. Help me to search out your will for me and not be distracted by earthly goals. Show me how to leave behind the roadblocks to following the life Christ has shown us. May we find true peace through Your grace and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Linda Ruese, Finance & Legal Operations Team Leader

DAY 18—Tuesday

Dare to Put Your Love in Action

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'" ~Matthew 25:34-40 (New International Version)

Have you seen the movie “Bruce Almighty?” Jim Carrey plays Bruce, a man on a life path that concentrates only on that which benefits him. Morgan Freeman stars as God, who takes on a human form to show Bruce a path that considers the needs of others. He does this by giving Bruce a taste of almighty power. We’re talking parting-the-Red-Sea, smiting-the-wicked power of God. Initially, Bruce uses this power to cause his rivals to fail, to clear traffic jams that complicate his commute, to housebreak his dog and to give his girlfriend certain physical attributes that make her more appealing to him.

Bruce frequently sidesteps the same homeless man we have all seen ourselves: the filthy man in rags with a sign imploring us to drop something into his cup. Bruce barely takes notice. But the beggar watches discerningly as Bruce goes along selfish way, oblivious to the needs of others.

Cut to the Hollywood Happy Ending: Bruce learns his lesson. He celebrates the successes of others and finds joy in service to his community. In the final scene, we again see the beggar, and through Hollywood magic, the beggar’s sad, filthy face morphs into that of Morgan Freeman’s. The beggar who saw Bruce at his least merciful moments was actually God all along.

How often do we sidestep the opportunity to put our Love in Action? We may even rationalize it by speculating that the beggar is a scam artist who earns \$50k a year in his cup, or by casting judgments about whether the single mother on welfare should just go get a job. Is that our call to make? No, our call is to love the least of our brothers and sisters, even as we would love God, and as God has loved us.

Dear Lord: Give us the courage to put our love in action for your children in need who we encounter in our daily lives, and to seek out opportunities to provide care and comfort to those we may not otherwise see.

Sarah Jacobs, Council Vice-President

DAY 19—Wednesday

Dare to Stand Out in a Crowd

[Daniel 3:4-28 God saves Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fire in the furnace.] *Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. ~Daniel 3:16-17 (New International Version)*

Sometimes it can be hard to be an individual in today's society. We feel the need to conform to peer pressure and live up to others expectations. However, the Bible tells us that we should follow God's example even if it is not comfortable. Through our faith in God all things are possible.

Dear God, Give us the strength to stand out in a crowd. Strength that is greater than the power of humans so that we can overcome negative influences. Help us to not conform to the standards of this world and to live our lives in Your image. Amen

High School Sunday School Class
facilitated by Andrea Hammerla & Tim Miller

DAY 20—Thursday
Dare to Be a Lifelong Learner

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

~Ephesians 4:11-14 (New International Version)

Having been raised in the Church, considering myself to be a practicing, church-going Christian, I realized that I knew lots of bits and pieces from the Bible. However, there were many gaps in my knowledge, and I very much wanted to read, understand and get a sense of the continuity of the Bible. My husband felt the same way, so we started to seek Bible Study opportunities. In addition to Bible Studies at Good Shepherd, we were very fortunate to be able to attend the Lay School of Theology at Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary, held every summer. These experiences have greatly enriched my life, helped me to cope with adversity, and made me a much happier, fulfilled person. I've found that studying the Bible is like peeling an onion; when one layer is uncovered, there is another waiting underneath. There is so much material in His word, the Bible, that to fulfill God's call to further His Church, as outlined in Ephesians 4:11-14, we must study throughout our lives to realize the depth of His love, the power of His Grace, and the best way we can serve.

Dear Heavenly Father—thank you for your love, your grace freely given, and your many gifts to us, your children. Please open our minds and hearts as we read your word so that we may discern your will, and live our lives in a way that is pleasing to you. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Joan Titland, Lay School of Theology Participant

DAY 21—Friday

Dare to Come Home

[Luke 15:11-24 The parable of the Prodigal Son] *So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'* So they began to celebrate. ~Luke 15:20-24 (New International Version)

Home. That place where we feel safe, secure, comfortable, known, loved, at peace. As I sit listening and practicing the music for “Moses and The Burning Within” I notice this theme of searching for home keeps popping up. In the storyline Moses comes to realize that his “home” is in God—living within the presence of God now.

When a loved one dies, as Christians, we take comfort in the knowledge that they have “gone home” to Christ. We understand this going home to God, to Christ, as dying to our earthly reality and entering into God’s heavenly kingdom. Yet, I am beginning to see a new reality...in a way we are home already, when our lives are centered/focused on God and we live out our lives in the light of Christ’s love, then we are home no matter where that physical place is. It is when we forget to focus our attention on God, stop listening for the Holy Spirit’s guidance, and only see darkness, that we become lost. And how often is that—continually! I guess that is why the parable of the prodigal son is so well loved, we understand that habit of wandering off and getting ourselves lost and are oh so glad to hear that God will continually “welcome us home.”

Holy Spirit—we ask you to open our eyes, speak to our hearts, and guide our minds. Like two year olds we often proclaim “I can do it” and go where we think is right, when in reality we need to take your hand and follow. Help us to hear your voice and feel your presence so that we might always be “home” with you. Amen

Vicki Beilfuss, Stewardship Team Member

DAY 22—Saturday Dare to Teach

For it has pleased God to tell his people that the riches and glory of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. For this is the secret: Christ lives in you, and this is your assurance that you will share in his glory. So everywhere we go, we tell everyone about Christ. We warn them and teach them with all the wisdom God has given us, for we want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ. ~Colossians 1:27-28 (New Living Translation)

There are two main reasons many of us are intimidated by the concept of “dare to teach.” For those of us not trained as teachers, we feel ill-equipped to serve in that role. Comfort in our own faith and spirituality is another factor for many of us. How many times do we think “I don’t know enough about the Bible?” Or, maybe, our own faith and spirituality is very personal and therefore not easy for us to talk openly about. Well, the bottom line is, Christ is in each one of us and we are called to share...spread...teach the world about Christ. It’s not about knowing all the answers or being an expert on the Bible. It’s about how we use our relationships with each other to glorify God.

The real beauty in accepting the “dare to teach” challenge comes when we open up and share and/or teach others about Christ. As we reach out and help another on their faith journey, we will experience a deepening in our own spirituality. It is through our thoughts, word and actions that we teach others about Christ. Take the challenge...open up and share with others the Christ that lies in you!

Gracious God, we thank you for equipping us to teach the world about you. We ask for the courage and strength to bring glory to you in all that we do...through our thoughts, our words and our actions. May the Christ that lies in each of us be evident in all that we do. Amen.

Sandy Richter, Sunday School Superintendent

✠ 4th Sunday of Lent ✠

DAY 23—Monday

Dare To Be Extravagant

Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

~ John 12:1-3 (New International Version)

There are many ways to be extravagant. For a student on a budget, being extravagant might mean having a steak instead of a hot dog for dinner. For a new mom, being extravagant might mean hitting the snooze button for an extra few minutes of sleep. For a seasoned executive, being extravagant might mean investing in the sailboat he's had his eye on for decades.

And then there is Jesus' way of being extravagant. In this passage from John's Gospel, his extravagance is sitting right there at the dinner table. Lazarus. Formerly dead Lazarus. Now Lazarus was living, breathing, eating, and laughing. Jesus had raised him from the dead. Jesus gave him life. What could be more extravagant than that? Nothing.

But in this story, Lazarus' sister Mary responds to Jesus' gift of life with her own extravagant act. She pours out a jar of expensive perfume and washes Jesus' feet. She wipes his feet with her hair. Everyone can smell the extravagance as the scent of perfume fills the house. Jesus has poured out his life for Lazarus, for Mary, and for you. How will you respond to his extravagance? How will you pour yourself out for others? You don't need expensive perfume. Just a willing heart, a heart that will dare to give back generously to Jesus, the one who pours himself out for you and gives you new life.

Gracious God, I praise you this day. You are extravagant in your forgiveness, love, and grace. Open my eyes to the abundance of your love. Open my heart to receive your gift of life. By your Spirit, empower me to give myself away extravagantly in service to others for Jesus' sake. In your Son's name I pray, Amen.

The Rev. Paige G. Evers

DAY 24—Tuesday

Dare to Be Still

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Come and see the works of the LORD, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire. "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." ~Psalm 46:1-10 (New International Version)

When I received my cancer diagnosis, I realized I was in trouble. When I started the radiation treatments, I knew God would be testing me. Lying “still” on a hard, flat table everyday for 20 minutes has been a real challenge. But you don’t have to have a life-shaking event make you slow down and listen to God every day. God has plenty to say to you, but he requires your undivided attention. He certainly got mine. Verse ten tells us that we will know God and his sovereignty when we are “still.” Be still and know His will for you today.

Lord God, I may not realize all the close calls I’ve had, but I thank you for your hand of protection. Be with me as I anticipate changes I would not choose. Thank you for keeping me safe in your care.

Sandy Depkin, DayTimers participant

DAY 25—Wednesday

Dare to Dance

Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.

Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals.

Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.
~Psalm 150 (New International Version)

For many it is easier to talk to God in the defined structure of a worship service. Others can speak to God freely in thought and prayer. Dance is a way for people to express thoughts and feelings that are hard to voice or even to discover.

In our minds, there are two ways you can dance for God. In one you tell God of how you feel—you share your problems and ask for his help. In another you can worship God and everything he has done for us. Through dance only pure feelings and beliefs can come out. They are unobstructed by confusion, embarrassment and fear.

It is difficult to share something so personal with a group of people. Getting each movement perfect becomes more important than the reasons behind them. You become worried about making even the littlest mistakes.

When you dare to dance, it is not simply the action that you want to accomplish but the ability to share it. You have to be willing to let others see how you truly feel. No matter how strong our love for God is, it becomes worthless if we cannot spread our beliefs to others.

Dear God, sometimes we find it difficult to express our beliefs about you. Let us not be afraid to share them with others. Help us to give all our hearts in our worship of you whether it be through dance or another outlet. Amen.

Dana, Erin and April Hammerla, Teen Liturgical Dancers

DAY 26—Thursday

Dare To Be A Healing Presence

When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. ~Luke 9:1-2 (New International Version)

Jesus taught His disciples to heal and empowered them to go and carry out His ministry. He intended healing to be central in the church's ministry, and therefore, He sent His disciples out to do it. Jesus' disciples took this direction seriously and spread healing to the far corners of the earth. Christian healing is not a special gift only for a few, but a gift freely given to the whole community, which means it is entirely within our capabilities. It is our Christian duty to continue in the footsteps of Jesus and His disciples.

By our presence, we can bring healing to our families, peers, work situations, churches, and communities. God has given us to each other to love, support, comfort, and heal one another. When we ask God for healing, some kind of healing takes place, although it may not be in the form we expect. Why some people are healed physically and others are not can never be fully explained or understood. But we know that it is not because of our belief or unbelief. It has nothing to do with our goodness or lack of goodness. Pray, and believe that God's power is coming into use. His will for us is not pain and suffering, but wholeness. So be it!

Heavenly Father, You are the Source of all healing in body, mind, soul, and spirit. Help me to open my heart to receive the healing you have for me, and in doing so, let me be a healing presence for others; to communicate the healing Light of Christ to all those I meet in the course of my day. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Linda Herget, Health Ministry Team Leader

DAY 27—Friday
Dare To Keep A Promise!

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.” ~Isaiah 43:2-3 (New Revised Standard Version)

How many times do we make a promise and really keep it? When my son was small he would often come to me with my baseball glove and ask me to play catch. I would sometimes catch myself saying, “I promise, in a few minutes.” Then he walks away, and time goes by without me keeping my word. He gets disappointed, and I feel bad for forgetting. I never intend to go back on my word, but it does happen from time to time.

One thing we know from God and His Word is that when He makes a promise, He always follows through. Here is a great definition of a promise: an assurance that God gives His people so that they can walk by faith while they wait for Him to work. When God makes us a promise, He always keeps it. We can always depend on Him. Are you a promise-maker or promise-keeper? God is both. He makes and keeps His promises. We can stand on that guarantee even through tough times. He is with us, in control, always good and always watching over us. That should give us all comfort today. Even though we fail on our promises from time to time, God never will. That is a promise.

Heavenly Father, before we ask you for anything, let us give you thanks for everything that you have provided to us. We pray that you would give us the strength and courage to do what is right at all times. As you have kept your promises to us, fill us with the courage to keep our promises and that nothing which is our duty to do, may be too hard for us. In His name we pray! Amen

Don Erickson, Council President

DAY 28—Saturday
Dare to Be a Steward of the Earth

He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate—bringing forth food from the earth: wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart.

The trees of the LORD are well watered, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. There the birds make their nests; the stork has its home in the pine trees. The high mountains belong to the wild goats; the crags are a refuge for the coney. ~Psalm 104:14-18 (New International Version)

We often take things for granted, such as the groceries on the shelf at the supermarket or the plentiful supply of fish in the ocean. We teach our children to pray at meal time words that are spoken daily and repeated meal after meal, to the point that we are not even listening to what we are saying. We invite Jesus to be our guest, and ask that the gifts He sends us be blessed. All that He provides is from the earth, and we have been entrusted to use those resources wisely for they are for the service of all humankind.

So as we busily go about our lives using the Lord's gifts, we must be good stewards of the source of those gifts so we do not upset the balance of our own indulgence and the ability of the earth to continue to provide for all. Be careful to only take from the earth what you need and to share with others so as not to waste those precious gifts we so often take for granted.

Father, all that you provide is from the earth. By your hand all things grow and flourish for the service of humankind. We ask that you help us be caring stewards of the earth so we may ensure its lasting bounty forever. Amen.

Geoffrey S. DeVinney, Usher

✠ **5th Sunday of Lent** ✠

DAY 29—Monday

Dare To Look Foolish

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. ~1 Corinthians 1:18-25 (New International Version)

Growing up in a Christian household I learned all the wonderful Bible stories as a child and embraced them while growing up. However, if I sit back and think how some of these stories would sound to a non-Christian adult, it makes me wonder. Sure, Noah built an ark. But have you ever really thought about how VERY large the ark must have been? Noah dared to listen to God, and his neighbors thought he was nuts. What about David, the small shepherd boy who killed the giant Goliath with one small stone? Seemingly impossible. Then there's the baby born in a stable, who died on a cross, whom we call Lord and Savior. God's ways are not the ways of the world. The wisdom of God is foolishness to this world. He dares us to turn the other cheek, to walk a mile in someone else's shoes, and to love our enemies. That's not what this world teaches us. God teaches us to listen and obey Him even if His ways seem a bit foolish. He is willing to take a chance on us to spread His Word. How foolish is that? Maybe we should take a chance on Him. Go ahead—I dare you—be a Fool for Christ!

Gracious God, thank you for your foolish wisdom so that we might understand your Word more fully. Teach us to be Fools for Christ by living out the gospel. Amen.

Missy Leppo, Clown Ministry

DAY 30—Tuesday

Dare To Love One Another

A new command I give to you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. ~John 13:34-35 (New International Version)

At first glance, perhaps this seems easy to do. I love my wife, children, grandchildren, and family members. But in reality, it is most difficult to do. God call us to love one another in the good times and in the difficult; times when we don't feel very much love at all. And He is calling us to love not only our family, our friends and those who think and act like we do, but also to love ... our enemies! He calls us to be Peacemakers—to react differently than the world does when we find ourselves in an unloving mood or situation. As a Peacemaker, He calls us to see this unloving situation, this conflict, this disagreement as an opportunity to restore a relationship—to love one another.

Heavenly Father, as we journey to the cross this Lenten season, help us to learn how to be Peacemakers and love one another. Open our eyes to see opportunity instead of conflict. Help us to understand what unconditional love really means. And in doing that, all men will know we are your disciples as we love one another. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen.

Owen Ashbrook, Reconciliation Team Member

DAY 31—Wednesday

Dare to Spread the Gospel

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." ~Matthew 27:18-27 (New International Version)

Many people, because of illness, injury, or even old age, can no longer attend worship or participate in the Lord's Supper at their church. Taking prayer, meditation, and communion to shut-ins as well as through actions of kindness, compassion, and love is how God has called me to

spread his Gospel, his love, to others. By spreading Christ's Gospel of love and caring through example, you will teach others to obey everything that God has commanded and help them to understand that God is always with them—to the end of the age. How is God calling you to spread the good news of God's love?

Heavenly Father—lead us in the path so that we will follow you. Teach us to always love you and spread your Gospel to those who do not know you. We'll go where you want us to go dear Lord, over mountain or plain or sea. We'll say what you want us to say dear Lord, we'll be what you want us to be. May our actions of kindness and compassion, reflect our love for you. You are always with us, to the end of the age. Amen

Shirley Ernst, Eucharistic Minister

DAY 32—Thursday Dare to Study Scripture

Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. ~Psalm 25:4-5 (New International Version)

Making a study of Scripture part of your daily life is not nearly as daunting as it sounds. Jesus extends an invitation to us—“Follow me,” a clear and personal call to Christians from one who already knows us and our failings and yet asks us to be with him. So go ahead and dust off that Bible, open it and allow God's grace to enter your life. God wants the best life possible for you. By studying his word you can discover things about yourself and the world, and how you fit into God's plan. Dare to join a study group and surround yourself with other Christians who are hungry for God's presence in their lives. Dare to grow through the word of God and begin to incorporate his precepts into your life. Scripture will quickly become an important essential of your day!

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of your word. Bless us as we attempt to discern the plan that you have for our lives. Grant us insight and wisdom to apply scripture to our world in a way that pleases you. Lead us toward you each time we read, and fill us with your presence. Amen.

Carolyn Darrow, Drama Group Participant

DAY 33—Friday

Dare to Pray Aloud

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he was finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples.” ~Luke 11:1 (New International Version)

The disciple did not ask Jesus “how” to pray the disciples said, “teach us to pray.” Jesus responded with the prayer about which Martin Luther said, “I am convinced that when a Christian rightly prays The Lord’s Prayer...his praying is more than adequate.”

This prayer, each of us learned as children, has been given many names: The Lord’s Prayer, The Jesus Prayer, The Our Father, Pater Noster, The Disciple’s Prayer. As children we learned to repeat the prayer without self-consciousness or guile. Throughout our lives we have spoken these words during the worship liturgy, whenever we were frightened or in need of healing, when we felt despair or alone. The familiar words gave us a direct line to God, brought us comfort, and connected us with generations of Christians who preceded us.

As adult, however, when asked to pray aloud in a group setting, we feel awkward, and become self-conscious and tongue-tied. Praying daily; whether a memorized prayer or a verse of scripture, a hymn or a Psalm; prepares us to find our comfort level whenever we hold a conversation with God. In Matthew 18:20, Jesus tells us, “...For where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them.”

The more often you pray in private, during worship, with a prayer-partner, or in public, the greater your confidence and comfort level will be. Let your mind relax and lead you into that quiet place you have reserved for you and God, then speak from your heart:

God, be in my head and in my comprehension, be in my eyes and in my seeing, be in my mouth and in my speaking, be in my head and in my thinking. Hear my prayer. Amen.

Doris U. Mellor, Prayer Shawl Ministry Participant

DAY 34—Saturday

Dare To Pass On The Faith

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. ~Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (New International Version)

As parents one of the most important tasks God has charged us with doing is passing on the faith to our children. We know we don't always follow his examples and yet we must "impress" God's love and understanding upon our children. How can we pass our faith to our children? And where do we start?

With children, it starts within your family. Simple things such as thanking God for our daily blessings (singing the 'Johnny Appleseed' grace is a favorite in our household), reciting a prayer at bedtime or simply talking about God whenever the opportunity presents itself. Attend church as a family and help them find the correct hymn or scripture. Have them attend Vacation Bible School, Mar-Lu-Ridge or create care packages in order to demonstrate ways to 'pass it on'. This brings the joy and love of God into our children's lives and ours as well.

Dear Lord, thank you for the beautiful gift of our children. Thank you for allowing us to be messengers of Your word, commandments and love. Thank you for guiding us as we impress upon our children throughout the day the beauty and power of Your Love that surrounds us. Thank you for the joy as we watch our children grow in the faith. In Your name we pray, Amen.

Rosemary & Chris Poling, Mom2Mom / Mar-Lu-Ridge Advocate

✠ **Palm Sunday** ✠

DAY 35—Monday
Dare to Care for the Lonely and Depressed

Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.
~Psalm 42:5-6 (New International Version)

During the course of our lives we will meet others whose paths have been hindered by moments of loneliness and depression. Sometimes we do not reach out to those in need for fear that we cannot meet their needs, do not know what to say, or even if our reactions will be appropriate. Placing ourselves in God's hands as we meet the needs of others allows us to react in a caring Christian way. We can illustrate to the down-trodden that God loves all and is with all even during the darkest times of trials and tribulations by sharing our faith in God. Following the Grace of the Lord will light your path and assist you in lightening the path of others. By daring to care for the lonely and depressed you are reaching outside of yourself and extending the arm of the Lord for support and comfort to those in need.

O most loving Father—you want us to give thanks for all things, to fear nothing, neither depression nor loneliness. Help us to reach out in your Name to show fellowship, grace, and love to those who suffer from loneliness and depression. Grant that those with overwhelming fears not hide their fears from the light of your immortal love, shown to us in your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sallie J. Gartside, Stephen Ministry

DAY 36—Tuesday
Dare to Share

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise - the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.
~ Hebrews 13:15-16 (New International Version)

Prior to two years ago, I was afraid to share, afraid of rejection. So I didn't share myself and when I did reach out to others to make their lives easier, if it wasn't accepted, I felt rejected. As events would have

it, due to an accident, I had a metanoia or an epiphany. Suddenly a support system of friends surfaced from places I was totally unaware of. I had to accept offers of help due to my condition. I realized, had I just asked for help, asked for others to share their lives with me before, I could have had that support all along. I now offer my assistance to others without concern of rejection for if they are ready to accept it, I will be there for them and they for me.

Oh Lord, guide us to reach out to one another to share your unconditional love and kindness with each other. Amen

Deborah Allen, Church Member

DAY 37—Holy Wednesday Dare to Sing A New Song

O sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples. For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods. ~Psalms 96:1-4 (New International Version)

Singing to the Lord can take many musical forms. Playing chimes to sing God's praises is one way of proclaiming His greatness. Often we take His many blessings and His infinite love for us for granted. Playing chimes is one way of praising God, glorifying Him, and thanking Him, through song, for the many blessings he has bestowed upon us. As we play our chimes we feel a joy and happiness beyond measure. We know many people who might not dare to share their best musical efforts, but love keeps our hearts ringing his praises.

Gracious God, thank you for the wonderful opportunity to come together with others to sing your praises—with our voices, with our chimes, or in our hearts. Help us to play with joy and enthusiasm all the verses you have chosen for us, in music and in life. God, I worship you, not only with joyous noise, but also with the silent music in my heart. Amen.

Mary Richter, DayChimer

DAY 38—Maundy Thursday
Dare to Stand UP for Justice

And the word of the LORD came again to Zechariah: "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other.'
~Zechariah 7:8-10 (New International Version)

This selected verse struck right to the core of my heart. I am a widow and my two sons, Alexander and Nelson, have been fatherless for almost 17 years. Raising the boys on my own has been at times a daunting and lonely task. We have faced more than our share of adversity. However, I was very blessed that God directed me into a position as an administrative law paralegal with the Legal Aid Bureau. My experience, knowledge, and education enabled me to stand up for justice for my clients and others. It also taught me how to advocate for my sons and myself.

Throughout the years, God has mercifully encircled us with a tremendous support system. My beloved prayer shawl, given to me last year, is a constant reminder that no matter how challenging life can be, Alexander, Nelson and I are always “wrapped up” in the loving, generous, compassionate arms of God, my church family and my friends.

Dear Lord, open the eyes and hearts of all your people so that they may see the suffering and misery of the poor, the orphaned and the widowed. Empower your people with compassion and mercy so that they may administer true justice to those in dire need—for you are merciful and full of love. Amen.

Silvia Meranski, Saturday Choir Member

DAY 39—Good Friday

Dare to Defend the Persecuted

[Luke 10: 29-37 The parable of the Good Samaritan] *"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."* ~Luke 10: 29-37 (New International Version)

People often take the wrong path in life and the choices that they make and then are judged wrongly by others. This doesn't make them bad people, they just need our help showing them the way to be a better person and to walk the path of Jesus. Even as Jesus faced betrayal, denial, crucifixion and death, Jesus was worried about his followers. He didn't ask that they be kept from being persecuted but he did pray that they remain in God's love. Always remember WWJD—What would Jesus do?

Dear Most Heavenly Father, Let us remember that when we laugh at someone, they feel pain. Let us remember that when we pick on someone they are angry. Let us remember that when we don't stick up for someone who is being bullied, they are alone. Let us remember that we bully because we want to feel strong.

It is no longer enough to be sorry. It is no longer enough to boast. May we have the courage to confront ourselves in the 'not me', 'don't want to know', 'it's their problem', 'I'm not involved' attitude of today's world. Please give us the courage to confront ourselves in this world. For we are all hurt, all afraid, all alone, all different—we all have only one life and it is with you Lord. And all God's people say—AMEN

Middle School Sunday School Class
Facilitated by Val Andrews, Bob & Mary Richter

DAY 40—Holy Saturday / Vigil of Easter **Dare to Be a Peacemaker**

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.
~ Colossians 3:15-17 (New International Version Study Bible)

Peacemaking in our personal lives is a daily struggle. Every contact we have with another, whether it be a family member, at work, at church, or those whose lives just touch ours in some way presents an opportunity to glorify God and share Christ's love. Why shouldn't it be easy? Christ told us he left this world leaving us His peace. But, we're human; to live in peace takes requires us to be faithful each and every day. Love one another—and when disagreements arise, turn to God in prayer, and consider how those disagreements can be resolved. Being a peacemaker is not easy; but we have the Prince of Peace to show us the way

Oh Lord God—today I am called to be a peacemaker, but I am unfit for the task. Make me fit for your purposes, so I might serve others and honor you. Fill me with your Spirit so others may benefit from your fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control ... In short, Father, please give me the Spirit of Christ so that I might walk in His steps and guide your people into the path of your peace. Amen. [Excerpt from “A Conciliator’s Prayer” by Ken Sande, President, Peacemaker Ministries]

Barbara Zorn, Peacemaker Team Member

